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AN

ADDRESS

TO THE

OPPOSERS OF THE REPEAL

OF THE

CORPORATION AND TEST ACTS.

THE FOURTH EDITION.

A Syſtem of Toleration, attended with humiliating Diſtinctions, is ſo vicious in itſelf, that the Man who is forced to tolerate is as much diſſatisfied with the Law as he that obtains ſuch a Toleration.

Speech of COUNT CLERMONT TONNERE.

LONDON,

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, N° 72, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

MDCCXC.

[Price ONE SHILLING.]

BRITISH MUSEUM

AN

ADDRESS, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

HAD the queſtion of yeſterday been decided in a manner more favourable to our wiſhes, which however the previous intimations of your temper in the buſineſs left us little room to expect, we ſhould have addreſſed our thanks to you on the occaſion. As it is, we addreſs to you our thanks for much caſual light thrown upon the ſubject, and for many incidental teſtimonies of your eſteem (whether voluntary or involuntary we will not ſtop to examine) which in the courſe of this diſcuſſion you have favoured us with. We thank you for the compliment paid the Diſſenters, when you ſuppoſe that the moment they are eligible to places of power and profit, all ſuch

places will at once be filled with them. Not content with confounding, by an artful ſophiſm, the right of eligibility with the right to offices, you again confound that right with the probable fact, and then argue accordingly. Is then the Teſt Act, your boaſted bulwark, of equal neceſſity with the dykes in Holland; and do we wait, like an impetuous ſea, to ruſh in and overwhelm the land? Our pretenſions, Gentlemen, are far humbler. *We* had not the preſumption to imagine that, inconſiderable as we are in numbers, compared to the eſtabliſhed Church; inferior too in fortune and influence; labouring, as we do, under the frown of the Court, and the anathema of the orthodox; we ſhould make our way ſo readily into the ſecret receſſes of royal favour; and, of a ſudden, like the frogs of Egypt, ſwarm about your barns, and under your canopies, and in your kneading troughs, and in the chamber of the King. We rather

wiſhed

wiſhed this act as a removal of a ſtigma than the poſſeſſion of a certain advantage, and we might have been cheaply pleaſed with the acknowledgment of the right, though we had never been fortunate enough to enjoy the emolument.

Another compliment for which we offer our acknowledgements may be extracted from the great ferment, which has been raiſed by this buſineſs all over the country. What ſtir and movement has it occaſioned among the different orders of men! How quick the alarm has been taken, and ſounded from the Church to the Senate, and from the preſs to the people; while fears and forebodings were communicated like an electric ſhock! The old cry of, *the Church is in danger*, has again been made to vibrate in our ears. Here too if we gave way to impreſſions of vanity, we might ſuppoſe our-

ſelves of much greater importance in the political ſcale than our numbers and ſituation ſeem to indicate. It ſhews at leaſt we are feared, which to ſome minds would be the next grateful thing to being beloved. We, indeed, ſhould only wiſh for the latter; nor ſhould we have ventured to ſuppoſe, but from the information you have given us, that your Church *was* ſo weak. What! fenced and guarded as ſhe is with her excluſive privileges and rich emoluments, ſtately with her learned halls and endowed colleges, with all the attraction of her wealth, and the thunder of her cenſures; all that the orator calls *the majeſty of the Church* about her, and does ſhe, reſting in ſecurity under the broad buckler of the State, does ſhe tremble at the naked and unarmed ſectary? he, whoſe early connections, and phraſe uncouth, and unpopular opinions ſet him at a diſtance from the means of advancement; he,

he, who in the intercourſes of neighbourhood and common life, like new ſettlers, finds it neceſſary to clear the ground before him, and is ever obliged to root up a prejudice before he can plant affection. He is not of the world, Gentlemen, and the world loveth her own. All that diſtinguiſhes him from other men to common obſervation, operates in his diſfavour. His very advocates, while they plead his cauſe, are ready to bluſh for their client; and in juſtice to their own character think it neceſſary to diſclaim all knowledge of his obſcure tenets. And is it from his hand you expect the demolition of ſo maſſy an edifice? Does the ſimple removal of the Teſt Act involve its deſtruction? Theſe were not *our* thoughts. *We* had too much reverence for your eſtabliſhment to imagine that the ſtructure was ſo looſely put together, or ſo much ſhaken by years, as that the removal of ſo ſlight a pin ſhould endanger

the whole fabric—or is the Teſt Act the *taliſman* which holds it together, that, when it is broken, the whole muſt fall to pieces like the magic palace of an enchanter? Surely no ſpecies of regular architecture can depend upon ſo ſlight a ſupport. —— After all what is it we have aſked?——to ſhare in the rich benefices of the eſtabliſhed church? to have the gates of her ſchools and univerſities thrown open to us? No, let her keep her golden prebends, her ſcarfs, her lawn, her mitres. Let her dignitaries be ſtill aſſociated to the honours of legiſlation; and, in our courts of executive juſtice, let her inquiſitorial tribunals continue to thwart the ſpirit of a free conſtitution by a heterogeneous mixture of prieſtly juriſdiction. Let her ſtill gather into barns, though ſhe neither ſows nor reaps. We deſire not to ſhare in her good things. We know it is the children's bread, which muſt not be given

to

to dogs. But *having* theſe good things, we *could* wiſh to hear her ſay with the generous ſpirit of Eſau, *I have enough, my brother.* We could wiſh to be conſidered as children of the State, though we are not ſo of the Church. She muſt excuſe us if we look upon the alliance between her and the State as an ill ſorted union, and herſelf as a mother-in-law who, with the too frequent arts of that relation, is ever endeavouring to prejudice the State, the common parent of us all, againſt a part of his offspring, for the ſake of appropriating a larger portion to her own children. We claim no ſhare in the dowry of her who is not our mother, but we may be pardoned for thinking it hard to be deprived of the inheritance of our father.

But it is objected to us that we have ſinned in the manner of making our requeſt; we have brought it forward as a claim inſtead

of

of aſking it as a favour. We ſhould have ſued, and crept, and humbled ourſelves. Our preachers and our writers ſhould not have dared to expreſs the warm glow of honeſt ſentiment, or, even in a foreign country glance at the downfall of a haughty ariſtocracy. As we were ſuppliants, we ſhould have behaved like ſuppliants, and then perhaps———No, Gentlemen, we wiſh to have it underſtood, that we *do* claim it as a right. It loſes otherwiſe half its value. We claim it as men, we claim it as citizens, we claim it as good ſubjects. We are not conſcious of having brought the diſqualification upon ourſelves by a failure in any of theſe characters.

But we already enjoy a complete toleration ——It is time, ſo near the end of the eighteenth century, it is ſurely time to ſpeak with preciſion, and to call things by their proper

names

names. What you call toleration, we call the exerciſe of a natural and unalienable right. We do not conceive it to be toleration, firſt to ſtrip a man of all his deareſt rights, and then to give him back a part; or even if it were the whole. You tolerate us in worſhipping God according to our conſciences ——and why not tolerate a man in the uſe of his limbs, in the diſpoſal of his private property, the contracting his domeſtic engagements, or any other the moſt acknowledged privileges of humanity? It is not to theſe things that the word toleration is applied with propriety. It is applied, where from lenity or prudence we forbear doing all which in juſtice we might do. It is the bearing with what is confeſſedly an evil, for the ſake of ſome good with which it is connected. It is the Chriſtian virtue of long ſuffering; it is the political virtue of adapting meaſures to times and ſeaſons and ſituations.

Abuſes

Abuſes are tolerated, when they are ſo interwoven with the texture of the piece, that the operation of removing them becomes too delicate and hazardous. *Unjuſt claims* are tolerated, when they are complied with for the ſake of peace and conſcience. The failings and imperfections of thoſe characters in which there appears an evident preponderancy of virtue, are tolerated. Theſe are the proper objects of toleration, theſe exerciſe the patience of the Chriſtian and the prudence of the Stateſman; but if there be a power that advances pretences which we think unfounded in reaſon or ſcripture, that exerciſes an empire within an empire, and claims ſubmiſſion from thoſe naturally her equals; and if we, from a ſpirit of brotherly charity, and juſt deference to public opinion, and a ſalutary dread of innovation, acquieſce in theſe pretenſions; let her at leaſt be told that the virtue of forbearance ſhould be transferred,

and

and that it is we who tolerate her, not ſhe who tolerates us.

Complete Toleration, though an expreſſion often adverted to by both parties, is in truth a ſoleciſm in terms; for all that is tolerated ought to be done away whenever it is found practicable and expedient. Complete Convaleſcence is no longer Convaleſcence, but Health; and complete Toleration is no longer Toleration, but Liberty. Let the term therefore be diſcarded, which, however ſoftened, involves in it an inſult with regard to us, and however extended, an abſurdity with regard to yourſelves. Senſible that a ſpirit of liberality requires the indulgence to be *complete*, and deſirous at the ſame time to retain the idea of our holding it through ſufferance and not of right, you have been betrayed into this incongruity of expreſſion. Thoſe are always liable to be betrayed into ſuch, who have not the

courage

courage to embrace a ſyſtem in its full extent, and to follow a principle wherever it may lead them. Hence the *progreſs* from Error to Truth, and from Bigotry to the moſt enlarged freedom of ſentiment, is marked with greater *inconſiſtencies* than that ſtate in which the mind quietly reſts in the former poſition. It is only when we view objects by a dubious and uncertain twilight that we are apt to miſtake their figure and diſtances, and to be diſturbed by groundleſs terrors; in perfect darkneſs we form no judgment about them.—It has ever been the untoward fate of your Church to partake largely of theſe inconſiſtencies. Placed between the Catholics on one ſide, and the Diſſenters on the other, ſhe has not been able to defend either her reſiſtance or her reſtraints, and lies equally open to cenſure for her perſecution and her diſſent. Preſſed by the difficulties of her peculiar ſituation, ſhe is continually obliged in the courſe of her polemic

warfare

warfare to change her ground, and alter her mode of defence; and like the poor Bat in the fable, to tell a different ſtory upon every new attack; and thus it muſt be, till ſhe ſhall have the magnanimity to make uſe of all her light, and follow her reaſon without reſerve.

For Truth is of a nature ſtrangely encroaching, and ought to be kept out entirely if we are not diſpoſed to admit her with perfect freedom. You cannot ſay to her, Thus far ſhalt thou go, and no further. Give her the leaſt entrance, and ſhe will never be ſatisfied till ſhe has gained entire poſſeſſion. Allow her but a few plain axioms to work with, and ſtep by ſtep, ſyllogiſm after ſyllogiſm, ſhe inſenſibly mines her way into the very heart of her enemy's entrenchments. Truth is of a very intolerant ſpirit. She will not make any compromiſe with Error, and if ſhe be obliged to hold any fellowſhip with her, it is ſuch

fellowſhip

fellowſhip as light has with darkneſs, a perpetual warfare and oppoſition. Every conceſſion made by her antagoniſt is turned into a freſh weapon againſt her, and being herſelf invulnerable, ſhe is ſure to gain by each ſucceſſive conteſt, till her adverſary is driven from every ſhelter and lurking-hole, and fairly obliged to quit poſſeſſion of the field.

But this, it is again imputed to us, is no conteſt for religious liberty, but a conteſt for power, and place, and influence. We want civil offices—And why ſhould citizens *not* aſpire to civil offices? Why ſhould not the fair field of generous competition be freely opened to every one!——A contention for power——It is not a contention for power between Churchmen and Diſſenters, nor is it as Diſſenters we wiſh to enter the liſts; we wiſh to bury every name of diſtinction in the common appellation of Citizen. We wiſh not

the

the name of Diſſenter to be pronounced, except in our theological reſearches and religious aſſemblies. It is you, who by conſidering us as Aliens, make us ſo. It is you who force us to make our diſſent a prominent feature in our character. It is you who give relief, and cauſe to come out upon the canvas what we modeſtly wiſhed to have ſhaded over, and thrown into the back ground. If we are a party, remember it is you who force us to be ſo.——We ſhould have ſought places of truſt—By no unfair, unconſtitutional methods ſhould we have ſought them, but in the open and honourable rivalſhip of virtuous emulation; by trying to deſerve well of our King and our Country. Our attachment to both is well known.

Perhaps however we have all this while miſtaken the matter, and what we have taken for bigotry and a narrow-minded ſpirit is

after all only an affair of calculation and arithmetic. Our fellow-ſubjects remember the homely proverb, " the fewer the better cheer," and, very naturally, are glad to ſee the number of candidates leſſened for the advantages they are themſelves ſtriving after. If ſo, we aſk their excuſe, their conduct is quite ſimple, and if, from the number of concurrents, Government were to ſtrike out all above or under five feet high, or all whoſe birth-days happened before the Summer Solſtice, or, by any other mode of diſtinction equally arbitrary and whimſical were to reduce the number of their rivals, *they* would be equally pleaſed, and equally unwilling to admit an alteration. We are a mercantile people, accuſtomed to conſider chances, and we can eaſily perceive that in the lottery of life, if a certain proportion are by ſome means or other excluded from a prize, the adventure is exactly ſo much the better for the remainder.

If

If this indeed be the caſe, as I ſuſpect it may, we have been accuſing you wrongfully. Your conduct is founded upon principles as ſure and unvarying as mathematical truths; and all further diſcuſſion is needleſs. We drop the argument at once. Men have now and then been reaſoned out of their prejudices, but it were a hopeleſs attempt to reaſon them out of their intereſt.

We likewiſe beg leave to apologize to thoſe of the clergy, whom we have unwittingly offended by endeavouring to include *them* as parties in our cauſe. 'Pricked to it by fooliſh honeſty and love,' we thought that what appeared ſo grievous to us could not be very pleaſant to them: but we are convinced of our miſtake, and ſorry for our officiouſneſs. We own it, Sirs, it was a fond imagination that becauſe *we* ſhould have felt uneaſy under the obligation impoſed upon you, it ſhould

have the ſame effect upon yourſelves. It was weak to impute to you an idle delicacy of conſcience, which perhaps can only be preſerved at a diſtance from the ſplendid ſcenes which you have continually in proſpect. But you will pardon us. We did not conſider the force of early diſcipline over the mind. *We* are not accuſtomed to thoſe ſalvos, and gloſſes, and accommodating modes of reaſoning with which you have been long familiarized. You have the happy art of making eaſy to yourſelves greater things than this. You are regularly diſciplined troops, and underſtand every nice manœuvre and dextrous evolution which the nature of the ground may require. We are like an unbroken horſe; hard mouthed, and apt to ſtart at ſhadows. Our conduct towards you in this particular we acknowledge may fairly provoke a ſmile at our ſimplicity. Beſides, upon reflection what ſhould you ſtartle at? The mixture of ſecular and religious

concerns

concerns cannot to you appear extraordinary; and in truth nothing is more reaſonable than that, as the State has been drawn in to the aggrandizement of your Church, your Church ſhould in return make itſelf ſubſervient to the convenience of the State. If we are wiſe, we ſhall never again make ourſelves uneaſy about your ſhare of the grievance.

But we were enumerating our obligations to you, Gentlemen, who have thwarted our requeſt, and we muſt take the liberty to inform you that if it be any object of our ambition to exiſt and attract notice as a ſeparate body, you have done us the greateſt ſervice in the world. What we deſired, by blending us with the common maſs of citizens, would have ſunk our relative importance, and conſigned our diſcuſſions to oblivion. You have refuſed us; and by ſo doing, you keep us under the eye of the public, in the intereſting

point of view of men who ſuffer under a depri-
vation of their rights. You have ſet a mark
of ſeparation upon us, and it is not in our
power to take it off, but it is in our power to
determine whether it ſhall be a diſgraceful
ſtigma or an honourable diſtinction. If, by
the continued peaceableneſs of our demeanour,
and the ſuperior ſobriety of our converſation,
a ſobriety for which we have not yet quite
ceaſed to be diſtinguiſhed; if, by our attention
to literature, and that ardent love of liberty
which you are pretty ready to allow us, we de-
ſerve eſteem, we ſhall enjoy it. If our riſing
ſeminaries ſhould excel in wholeſome diſci-
pline and regularity, if *they* ſhould be ſchools
of morality, and yours, unhappily, ſhould be
corrupted into ſchools of immorality, you will
entruſt us with the education of your youth,
when the parent, trembling at the profligacy
of the times, wiſhes to preſerve the blooming
and ingenuous child from the degrading taint

of

of early licentiouſneſs. If our writers are ſolid, elegant, or nervous, you will read our books and imbibe our ſentiments, and even your Preachers will not diſdain, occaſionally, to *illuſtrate* our morality. If we enlighten the world by philoſophical diſcoveries, you will pay the involuntary homage due to genius, and boaſt of our names when, amongſt foreign ſocieties, you are inclined to do credit to your country. If your reſtraints operate towards keeping us in that middle rank of life where induſtry and virtue moſt abound, we ſhall have the honour to count ourſelves among that claſs of the community which has ever been the ſource of manners, of population and of wealth. If we ſeek for fortune in the track which you have left moſt open to us, we ſhall increaſe your commercial importance. If, in ſhort, we render ourſelves worthy of reſpect, you cannot hinder us from being reſpected—you cannot help reſpecting us—

and in ſpite of all names of opprobrious ſepa-ration, we ſhall be bound together by mutual eſteem and the mutual reciprocation of good offices.

One good office we ſhall moſt probably do you is rather an invidious one, and ſel-dom meets with thanks. By laying us under ſuch a marked diſqualification, you have rendered us—we hope not uncandid—we hope not diſaffected—May the God of love and charity preſerve us from all ſuch acrimo-nious diſpoſitions! But you certainly have, as far as in you lies, rendered us quick ſighted to encroachment and abuſes of all kinds. We have the feelings of men; and though we ſhould be very blameable to ſuffer ourſelves to be biaſſed by any private hardſhips, and hope that, as a body, we never ſhall, yet this you will conſider, that we have at leaſt no bias on the other ſide. We have no favours to blind

us,

us, no golden padlock on our tongues, and therefore it is probable enough, that, if cauſe is given, we ſhall cry aloud and ſpare not. But in this you have done yourſelves no diſſervice. It is perfectly agreeable to the jealous ſpirit of a free conſtitution that there ſhould be ſome who will ſeaſon the maſs with the wholeſome ſpirit of oppoſition. Without a little of that bitter leaven there is great danger of its being corrupted.

With regard to ourſelves, you have by your late determination given perhaps a ſalutary, perhaps a ſeaſonable check to that ſpirit of worldlineſs, which of late has gained but too much ground amongſt us. Before you—before the world—we have a right to bear the brow erect, to talk of rights and ſervices; but there is a place and a preſence where it will become us to make no boaſt. We, as well as you, are infected. We, as well

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as you, have breathed in the univerſal contagion—a contagion more noxious, and more difficult to eſcape, than that which on the plains of Cherſon has juſt ſwept from the world the martyr of humanity; the contagion of ſelfiſh indifference, and faſhionable manners has ſeized us: and our languiſhing virtue feels the debilitating influence.—If you were more converſant in our aſſemblies than your prejudices will permit you to be, you would ſee indifference, where you fancy there is an over proportion of zeal: you would ſee principles giving way, and families melting into the boſom of the church under the warm influence of proſperity. You would ſee that eſtabliſhments, without calling coercive meaſures to their aid, poſſeſs attraction enough ſeverely to try the virtue and ſteadineſs of thoſe who ſeparate from them. You need not ſtrew thorns, or put bars acroſs our path; your golden apples are ſufficient to make us turn

out

out of the way. Believe me, Gentlemen, you do not *know* us ſufficiently to aim your cenſure where we ſhould be moſt vulnerable.

Nor need you apprehend from us the ſlighteſt danger to your own eſtabliſhment. If you will needs have it that it *is* in danger, we wiſh you to be aware that the danger ariſes from among yourſelves. If ever your creeds and formularies become as grievous to the generality of your Clergy as they already are to many delicate and thinking minds amongſt them; if ever any material articles of your profeſſed belief ſhould be generally diſbelieved, or that order which has been accuſtomed to ſupply faithful paſtors and learned enquirers after truth ſhould become a burden upon a generous public; and if her dignities and emoluments, inſtead of being graced by merit or genius, and thus in ſome meaſure balancing the weight of hereditary honour and in-

fluence,

fluence, ſhould be conſidered as appendages to them, the cry for reformation would then be loud and prevailing. It *would* be heard. Doctrines which will not ſtand the teſt of argument and reaſon will not always be believed, and when they have ceaſed to be generally believed they will not long be articles of belief. If therefore there is any weak place in your ſyſtem, any thing which you are obliged to gloſs over, and touch with a tender hand, any thing which ſhrinks at inveſtigation—Look ye to it, its extinction is not far off. Doubts and difficulties, that ariſe firſt amongſt the learned, will not ſtop there; they inevitably ſpread downwards from claſs to claſs; and if the people ſhould ever find that your articles are generally ſubſcribed as articles of peace, they will be apt to remember that they are articles of expence too. If all the Diſſenters in the kingdom, ſtill believing as Diſſenters do, were this moment,

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in order, to avoid the reproach of ſchiſm, to enter the pale of your church, they would do you miſchief; they would haſten its decline; and if all who in their hearts diſſent from your profeſſions of faith were to ceaſe making them, and throw themſelves amongſt the Diſſenters, you would ſtand the firmer for it. Your church is in no danger becauſe we are of a different church; they might ſtand together to the end of time without interference; but it will be in great danger whenever it has within itſelf many who have thrown aſide its doctrines, or even, who do not embrace them in the ſimple and obvious ſenſe. All the power and policy of man cannot continue a ſyſtem *long* after its truth has ceaſed to be acknowledged, or an eſtabliſhment *long* after it has ceaſed to contribute to utility. It is equally vain, as to expect to preſerve a tree, whoſe roots are cut away. It may look as green and flouriſhing as before for a ſhort

time, but its ſentence is paſſed, its principle of life is gone, and death is already within it. If then you think the church in danger, be not backward to preſerve the ſound by ſacrificing the decayed.

To return to ourſelves, and our feelings on the buſineſs lately in agitation—— You will excuſe us if we do not appear with the air of men baffled and diſappointed. Neither do we bluſh at our defeat; we may bluſh, indeed, but it is for our country; but we lay hold on the conſoling perſuaſion, that reaſon, truth and liberality muſt finally prevail. We appeal from Philip intoxicated to Philip ſober. We know you will refuſe us while you are narrow minded, but you will not always be narrow minded. You have too much light and candour not to have more. We will no more attempt to pluck the green unripe fruit. We ſee in you our future friends

and

and brethren, eager to confound and blend with ours your intereſts and your affections. You will grant us all we aſk. The only queſtion between us is, whether you will do it to-day—To-morrow you certainly will. You will even intreat us, if need were, to allow you to remove from your country the ſtigma of illiberality. We appeal to the certain, ſure operation of increaſing light and knowledge, which it is no more in your power to ſtop, than to repel the tide with your naked hand, or to wither with your breath the genial influence of vegetation. The ſpread of that light is in general gradual and imperceptible; but there are periods when its progreſs is accelerated, when it ſeems with a ſudden flaſh to open the firmament, and pour in day at once. Can ye not diſcern the ſigns of the times? The minds of men are in movement from the Boryſthenes to the Atlantic. Agitated with new and ſtrong emotions, they

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ſwell and heave beneath oppreſſion, as the ſeas within the Polar Circle, when, at the approach of Spring, they grow impatient to burſt their icy chains; when what, but an inſtant before, ſeemed ſo firm, ſpread for many a dreary league like a floor of ſolid marble, at once with a tremendous noiſe gives way, long fiſſures ſpread in every direction, and the air reſounds with the claſh of floating fragments, which every hour are broken from the maſs. The genius of Philoſophy is walking abroad, and with the touch of Ithuriel's ſpear is trying the eſtabliſhments of the earth. The various forms of Prejudice, Superſtition and Servility ſtart up in their true ſhapes, which had long impoſed upon the world under the revered ſemblances of Honour, Faith, and Loyalty. Whatever is looſe muſt be ſhaken, whatever is corrupted muſt be lopt away; whatever is not built on the broad baſis of public utility muſt be thrown

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to the ground. Obſcure murmurs gather, and ſwell into a tempeſt; the ſpirit of Enquiry, like a ſevere and ſearching wind, penetrates every part of the great body politic; and whatever is unſound, whatever is infirm, ſhrinks at the viſitation. Liberty, here with the lifted croſier in her hand, and the crucifix conſpicuous on her breaſt; there led by Philoſophy, and crowned with the civic wreath, animates men to aſſert their long forgotten rights. With a policy, far more liberal and comprehenſive than the boaſted eſtabliſhments of Greece and Rome, ſhe diffuſes her bleſſings to every claſs of men; and even extends a ſmile of hope and promiſe to the poor African, the victim of hard, impenetrable avarice. Man, *as* man, becomes an object of reſpect. Tenets are transferred from theory to practice. The glowing ſentiment and the lofty ſpeculation no longer ſerve 'but to adorn the pages of a book;' they are brought home to men's

buſineſs and boſoms; and, what ſome centuries ago it was daring but to think, and dangerous to expreſs, is now realized, and carried into effect. Syſtems are analyſed into their firſt principles, and principles are fairly purſued to their legitimate conſequences. The enemies of reformation, who palliate what they cannot defend, and defer what they dare not refuſe; who, with Feſtus, put off to a more convenient ſeaſon what, only becauſe it is the preſent ſeaſon is inconvenient, ſtand aghaſt; and find they have no power to put back the important hour, when nature is labouring with the birth of great events. Can ye not diſcern — But you do diſcern theſe ſigns; you diſcern them well, and your alarm is apparent. You ſee a mighty empire breaking from bondage, and exerting the energies of recovered freedom: and England—which was uſed to glory in being the aſſertor of liberty, and refuge of the oppreſſed——England

land, who with generous and reſpectful ſympathy, in times not far remote from our own memory, has afforded an aſylum to ſo many of the ſubjects of that very empire, when cruſhed beneath the iron rod of perſecution; and, by ſo doing, circulated a livelier abhorrence of tyranny within her own veins—— England, who has long reproached her with being a ſlave now cenſures her for daring to be free. England, who has held the torch to her, is mortified to ſee it blaze brighter in her hands. England, for whom, and for whoſe manners and habits of thinking, that empire has, for ſome time paſt, felt even an enthuſiaſtic prediliction; and to whom, as a model of laws and government, ſhe looks up with affectionate reverence——England, nurſed at the breaſt of liberty, and breathing the pureſt ſpirit of enlightened philoſophy, views a ſiſter nation with affected ſcorn and real jealouſy, and preſumes to aſk whether ſhe

yet exiſts——Yes, all of her exiſts that is worthy to do ſo. Her dungeons indeed exiſt no longer, the iron doors are forced, the maſſy walls are thrown down; and the liberated ſpectres, trembling between joy and horror, may now blazon the infernal ſecrets of their priſon houſe. Her cloiſtered Monks no longer exiſt, nor does the ſoft heart of ſenſibility beat behind the grate of a convent, but the beſt affections of the human mind permitted to flow in their natural channel, diffuſe their friendly influence over the brightening proſpect of domeſtic happineſs. Nobles, the creatures of Kings, exiſt there no longer; but Man, the creature of God, exiſts there. Millions of men exiſt there who, only now, truly begin to exiſt, and hail with ſhouts of grateful acclamation the better birth-day of their country. Go on, generous nation, ſet the world an example of virtues as you have of talents. Be our model, as we have been

yours. May the ſpirit of wiſdom, the ſpirit of moderation, the ſpirit of firmneſs, guide and bleſs your counſels. With intelligence to diſcern the beſt poſſible, may you have prudence to be content with the beſt practicable. Overcome our wayward perverſeneſs by your ſteadineſs and temper. Silence the ſcoff of your enemies, and the miſgiving fears of your timorous well-wiſhers. Go on to deſtroy the empire of prejudices, that empire of gigantic ſhadows, which are only formidable while they are not attacked. Cauſe to ſucceed to the mad ambition of conqueſt the pacific induſtry of commerce, and the ſimple, uſeful toils of agriculture. While your corn ſprings up under the ſhade of your Olives, may bread and peace be the portion of the Huſbandman; and when beneath your ardent ſun, his brow is bathed in honeſt ſweat, let no one dare any longer with hard and vexatious exactions to wring from him the bitter drop of anguiſh. Inſtructed by the expe-

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rience of paſt centuries, and by many a ſad and ſanguine page in your own hiſtories, may you no more attempt to blend what God has made ſeparate; but may religion and civil polity, like the two neceſſary but oppoſite elements of fire and water, each in its province do ſervice to mankind, but never again be forced into diſcordant union. Let the wandering pilgrims of every tribe and complexion, who in other lands find only an aſylum, find with you a country, and may you never ſeek other proof of the purity of your faith than the largeneſs of your charity. In your manners, your language, and habits of life, let a manly ſimplicity, becoming the intercourſe of equals with equals, take the place of overſtrained refinement and adulation. Let public reformation prepare the way for private. May the abolition of domeſtic tyranny introduce the modeſt train of houſhold virtues, and purer incenſe be burned upon the hallowed altar of

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conjugal fidelity. Exhibit to the world the rare phœnomenon of a patriot miniſter, of a philoſophic ſenate. May a pure and perfect ſyſtem of legiſlation proceed from their forming hands, free from thoſe irregularities and abuſes, the wear and tear of a conſtitution, which in a courſe of years are neceſſarily accumulated in the beſt formed States; and like the new creation in its firſt gloſs and freſhneſs, yet free from any taint of corruption, when its Maker bleſt and called it good. May you never loſe ſight of the great principle you have held forth, the natural equality of men. May you never forget that without public ſpirit there can be no liberty; that without virtue there may be a confederacy, but cannot be a community. May you, and may we, conſigning to oblivion every leſs generous competition, only conteſt who ſhall ſet the brighteſt example to the nations, and

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may its healing influence be diffuſed, till the reign of Peace ſhall ſpread

— — — ‘ from ſhore to ſhore,
‘ ’Till *Wars* ſhall ceaſe, and *Slavery* be no more.’

Amidſt cauſes of ſuch mighty operation, what are we, and what are our petty, peculiar intereſts! Triumph, or deſpondency, at the ſucceſs or failure of our plans, would be treaſon to the large, expanded, comprehenſive wiſh which embraces the general intereſts of humanity. Here then we fix our foot with undoubting confidence, ſure that all events are in the hands of him, who from ſeeming evil

— — — ‘ is ſtill educing good;
‘ And better thence again, and better ſtill,
‘ In infinite progreſſion.’

In this hope we look forward to the period when the name of *Diſſenter* ſhall no more be heard

heard of, than that of *Romaniſt* or *Epiſcopalian*, when nothing ſhall be venerable but truth, and nothing valued but utility.

March 3, 1790. A DISSENTER.

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